

PRESS RELEASE

Baker-Polito Administration Awards \$1 Million to Expand Economic Independence Programming to Three Housing Authorities

A Better Life will reach more than 500 new residents at three state-aided housing authorities

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Housing and Community Development

Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development

MEDIA CONTACT

Samantha Kaufman, Deputy Director of Communications

Online

samantha.kaufman@mass.gov (mailto:samantha.kaufman@mass.gov)

NEW BEDFORD — Today, the Baker-Polito Administration announced the expansion of A Better Life (ABL) program to three more housing authorities in Massachusetts, to support

families living in state-aided public housing achieve long-term economic independence. A Better Life connects families with resources to pursue education, employment and financial literacy. Today's awards will expand the program to the New Bedford, Gloucester, and Taunton Housing Authorities, and will reach more than 500 residents over the next three years.

"A Better Life leverages existing resources to help families pursue economic success, education, and employment opportunities," **said Governor Charlie Baker.** "Our administration is committed to expanding successful, innovative programming to meet the needs of our residents and we are proud to commit nearly \$1 million to see the extension of this program to New Bedford, Gloucester and Taunton."

"We are pleased to help more housing authorities implement this high-impact, successful program," **said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito.** "Our administration looks forward to helping more families across the Commonwealth substantially increase personal savings, reduce debt, earn degrees and obtain employment through this program's intensive case management and wrap-around services."

A Better Life focuses on providing economic advancement opportunities based on each family's individual circumstances. ABL pairs participating families with a Family Life Coach. Together with participants, coaches conduct a comprehensive assessment of residents' needs, and create a collaborative "family development plan." This plan helps families determine short and long-term goals in focus areas of employment, financial security, and education. Participants continue to receive support to discuss progress and accomplishments, and are given access to services through providers in partnership with the housing authority. The program also focuses on asset-building for families, and helps families increase their personal savings and address outstanding debt.

"Our economy relies on a skilled workforce, and it is critical we leverage every educational and employment opportunity for our residents," **said Housing and Economic Development Secretary Mike Kennealy.** "Our Administration continues to explore every avenue to lift families, with targeted services, job-training, education, and other assistance. We are proud to support programs like A Better Life, an important part of the suite of programming we provide to residents seeking opportunities in every region."

Funds totaling nearly \$1 million will enable housing authorities to implement the program over the next 18 months, with the opportunity for renewal for another 18-month period. [In 2017, four housing authorities received planning grants to expand ABL to their residents.](#)

[\(/news/baker-polito-administration-expands-innovative-economic-prosperity-programming-to-four\)](#) These awards will enable the recipient housing authorities to employ Family Life Coaches; partner with service providers to give residents access to resources including classes, training, and assistance with asset building; provide resident incentives; and cover other program costs. The grant will also include funding for technology to enable housing authorities to report on program success to DHCD according to specified economic mobility metrics.

“We have one of the most robust state-aided public housing portfolios in the nation, which presents us with the unique opportunity to connect thousands of residents with supportive services,” **said Acting Undersecretary of Housing and Community Development Jennifer Maddox.** “Opportunities like A Better Life empower families and residents to create long-term plans and achieve their goals, enhance their economic stability, and increase their earning potential.”

“Thanks to the support of the Baker-Polito Administration, the expansion of A Better Life to New Bedford and other cities will support families here in realizing goals such as earning a degree and finding a fulfilling career, through an active partnership with local housing authorities,” **said New Bedford Mayor Jon Mitchell.**

“Many of our residents want an education, they want to work, or they want to simply better themselves and this program will provide the necessary assistance to make that happen,” **said Steven Beauregard, Executive Director, New Bedford Housing Authority.** “A Better Life will be a game changer for many families and we are excited to be a participating Housing Authority.”

“Families and individuals live in public housing for one reason – it’s all that they can afford. A Better Life will give our families back hope,” **said David Houlden, Executive Director, Gloucester Housing Authority.** “It will help them to break down those barriers that have kept them from obtaining a decent job at a living wage. ABL help will help each

family meet their maximum potential and allow more families to move up and out of Public Housing making way for others.”

“We look forward to taking this journey toward self-sufficiency with our residents. Being able to provide support for our families under the ABL Program and work with them to accomplish their goals is a very special opportunity,” **said Colleen Doherty, Executive Director, Taunton Housing Authority.** “We are thankful for the grant funding and we can’t wait to see our ABL families succeed.”

“It is imperative that we continue to support local families seeking to improve their quality of life and escape the many hardships and inequities that poverty unjustly inflicts,” **said Senator Mark Montigny.** “This funding will help provide these residents with many of the necessary skills to do just that, and I look forward to the implementation of this innovative program.”

“Using technology and education to give a helping hand to our neighbors living in housing authority facilities is an investment in the next generation,” **said Representative Chris Hendricks.** “New Bedford is excited to expand on the success of A Better Life program in our community and is grateful to the Department of Housing and Community Development for their support.”

“I would like to thank the Baker-Polito Administration for this grant which will enable the New Bedford Housing Authority to empower residents to achieve economic independence by using a variety of tools provided through the ABL grant,” **said Representative Chris Markey.**

“I am excited to see ‘A Better Life’ coming to New Bedford. By promoting economic mobility and independence as well as educational programming, residents will be equipped with the tools they need to succeed,” **said Representative Paul Schmid.** “These tools will stay with them long after leaving the housing authority and, effectively, making way for more prospective residents to receive the same great opportunity.”

“This is yet another example of NBHA taking the initiative to expand needed services for its residents, and I commend the administration for making this funding a priority,” **said Representative Bill Straus.**

The Baker-Polito Administration has shown a deep commitment to increasing the production of housing across income levels. Since 2015, the administration has invested more than \$1 billion in affordable housing, resulting in the production and preservation of more than 17,000 housing units, including 15,000 affordable units. In 2018, [Governor Baker signed the largest housing bond bill in Massachusetts history](#)

(</news/governor-baker-signs-18-billion-affordable-housing-bill-to-increase-housing-production>),

committing more than \$1.8 billion to the future of affordable housing production and preservation. The Baker-Polito Administration has also advanced the development of more than 7,000 mixed-income housing units through the successful [MassWorks](#)

[Infrastructure Program](#) (</service-details/massworks-infrastructure-grants>), reformed the [Housing Development Incentive Program](#) (</service-details/housing-development-incentive-program-hdip>),

and worked with communities to implement smart-growth development and planning efforts.

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Media Contact

Samantha Kaufman, Deputy Director of Communications

Online

[**samantha.kaufman@mass.gov**](mailto:samantha.kaufman@mass.gov) (<mailto:samantha.kaufman@mass.gov>)



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